

Winter 2023

# rite now

THE MAGAZINE OF THE VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH



MOMENTS THAT MAKE YOU SMILE

[valleyofpittsburgh.org](http://valleyofpittsburgh.org)

# In Memoriam

Since our last issue, the following members of the Valley of Pittsburgh have been called home:

Ill. Ronald C. Troy, 33°

Thomas Allen Jr.  
Loren D. Beatty  
Michael A. Ceoffe  
Louis A. Eichert  
David C. Germadnik  
Ronald E. Jenny  
James Edwin Jones  
Richard W. Kenyon  
Dennis L. Marchand  
Roy F. McLaughlin  
John F. Munro  
Wilford M. Russell Jr.  
Franklin R. Simpson  
Donald L. Stefl  
John C. Tondora  
Henry R. Truax  
William J. Turlik



# riteNOW

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### about this issue

The holidays are supposed to be “the most wonderful time of the year,” but overspending, overeating, and overextending your already busy schedule can make them seem anything but wonderful. That’s why it is important for us to pause and reflect on the blessing we have. If

we push past the tinsel, turkey, and timelines that bring us stress, we can gain a little more perspective on just how blessed we are.

We hope this issue of *RiteNow* puts a smile on your face this holiday season.



# The Active

A message from the Supreme Council Active for Pennsylvania

SUPREME COUNCIL

## Midwinter Blues

By Paul J. Roup, 33°

As the days shorten leaving us in what seems to be interminable night, it's easy to pick up a case of the midwinter blues. The festivities and celebrations that have occupied the last several weeks are coming to a close leaving us with even more time to languish in the darkness.

One way to cure those blues is to go blue. By that, I mean the Blue Envelope Appeal! The Blue Envelope Appeal is the oldest jurisdiction-wide fundraising campaign at Supreme Council. It is an easy way for our members to support the vast array of charities of the Scottish Rite.

I bet you didn't know that contributing to the Blue Envelope appeal also directly benefits the Valley of Pittsburgh—in more than one way.

First, each Blue Envelope donation helps bring the Valley a little bit closer to becoming a Valley of Excellence. We achieved that distinction last year, but we need your help to reach it again.

Secondly, by a complex formula known only to a few dark and

mysterious figures at Supreme Council, and with the help of a room full of supercomputers, our donations (both in number and amount) counted against our total Valley membership divided by  $\pi$  determines the number of Abbott Scholarships that our Valley can award each year. Okay, that's probably not the formula, but the larger point still holds: the

more we give, the more we get. If each of us gives even five dollars, we have the chance to impact the lives of the children of our members in a positive and meaningful way.

Giving couldn't be easier. You can send a check in the actual blue envelope you received, you can drop a donation off at the Valley office, or you can visit [DonateRite.org](http://DonateRite.org) and give electronically. If you exercise this option, be

sure to select Blue Envelope Appeal from the dropdown menu and let them know you are from the Valley of Pittsburgh.

Take a moment right now and shake off your midwinter blues by giving to the Blue Envelope Appeal. You'll be glad you did. □

I bet you didn't know that contributing to the Blue Envelope appeal also directly benefits the Valley of Pittsburgh—in more than one way.



Paul J. Roup, 33°  
[proup@srmj.org](mailto:proup@srmj.org)



Scan to learn more about the Blue Envelope Appeal



# THE BLUE ENVELOPE



## The 2022 Blue Envelope Appeal

*As the Scottish Rite's oldest jurisdiction-wide fundraising appeal, the Blue Envelope is a tangible way for our Fraternity to join together and fulfill our commitment to our Brothers and our communities.*

*Donations to the Blue Envelope directly support our Scottish Rite Charities.*

Just as you have a profound impact on our Scottish Rite Charities, Blue Envelope donations have a positive impact on your Valley. Every Blue Envelope donation helps your Valley get one step closer to becoming a Valley of Excellence.

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**DONATE ONLINE AT [DONATERITE.ORG](https://donaterite.org)**

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# The Chief

A message from the Commander-in-Chief of the Valley of Pittsburgh

CONSISTORY

## An Extended Family

By William G. Johnston, 33°

The holiday season often amplifies the occasions to be thankful for the relationships we have in life like our friends, families, and relatives. We often spend the last weeks of the calendar year breaking bread with them and using our creativity to purchase or make gifts that are meaningful to our relationships with them.

Sometimes, this is the only time that we get to be together for the entire year. Whether it's due to the business of our lives or long distances to travel, we learn to cherish the opportunity as well as the time we get to spend together.

Being involved with the Fraternity, we have different frequencies with which we see and interact with our Brothers. Some we see and interact with on a weekly or monthly basis, at meetings or regularly occurring events. Some we see only at degree conferrals or Reunions. Some we only see at social events and informal activities. Some Brothers we see at all of the above. Freemasonry gives us many opportunities throughout the year to fraternize. I have been fortunate to be able to spend time with Brothers in all of these aspects, and I am

grateful for the experiences shared and the memories made.

As you probably know, I've spent many years involved in the ritualistic work of Masonry, not only in the Valley, but also in other bodies. Working together with a dedicated group of Brothers to provide a meaningful experience to candidates

Freemasonry has allowed both you and me to become a part of an extended family that goes beyond a local level—a family that exists in places I have yet to travel to and people I have yet to meet.

and members alike has been one of my greatest enjoyments in the Fraternity. Making an impression on a candidate that sparks his interest to get involved is the goal. But also watching a member grow in ritualistic ability and comfort level is a great reward. We are always building and growing in Masonry. To share these experiences with others is what develops our character as men and as Masons.

While the work of Masonry is necessary for the growth and perpetuity of the Fraternity, the fellowship aspect is the grease that keeps the wheels turning. I have experienced great enjoyment in many of the social opportunities provided by the Fraternity. Sharing stories about Freemasonry and getting to know my Brothers on a



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more personal level is another great benefit of membership. Social opportunities have also allowed me to meet members' spouses and children, and for them to meet my family as well. Many of these relationships have developed into friendships and spending time together outside of Masonic events.

Freemasonry has allowed both you and me to become a part of an extended family that goes beyond a local level—a family that exists in places I have yet to travel to and people I have yet to meet. While we think mainly of close friends and family during this time of year, I am also thankful for all those friendships and family that I've gained through Freemasonry. I hope you have found that same sense of gratitude that I have for our Fraternity and that you look as forward to making and developing those same relationships. Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season, and I hope to see you again and again and again in the New Year! □



# The Potent

A message from the Thrice Potent Master of the Gourgas Lodge of Perfection

LODGE OF PERFECTION

## The Rookies

By Eric S. Teasdale, 33°

My love of sports card collecting started when I was a kid. My dad would give my brother and me a dollar a day to buy baseball and/or football cards. Back in the 1970s, there were three types of baseball card packs available for purchase—the traditional wax packs, cello packs, and rack packs. The wax packs had wax paper as packaging, the cello packs contained more cards in the packs and had cellophane packaging so you could see the card on the top and bottom, and rack packs were a three-pack of cello packs. All of the packs came with a stick of bubble gum which made them popular with kids, but I wouldn't dare eat now. My brother and I always purchased the cello packs and were always looking for Pittsburgh Pirates and Pittsburgh Steelers cards. Once we would open the packs, we would then "flip" them to either win or lose the cards—gambling for kids. As you will find out later, "flipping" cards will end up being one of my biggest regrets in card collecting. I have continued to collect baseball and football cards for my entire adult life and have amassed a collection close to a quarter of a million cards, by my estimation. It was, and is, a great hobby, especially during my childhood.

There were three distinct shifts in card collecting that drastically

changed the landscape in my time of collecting. First was the introduction of more vendors to the card-producing landscape such as Upper Deck, etc.; second was the development of online auction sites like eBay in 1995, and third was the introduction of the sports card grading system in 1991 by Professional Sports Authenticator (PSA).

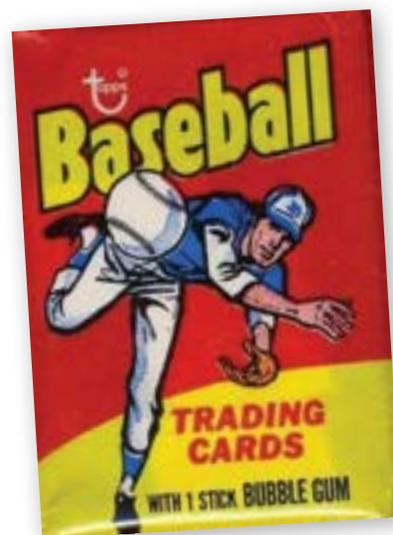
My goal before 1989, was to always collect and complete sets.

The card-collecting industry changed dramatically in the late '80s when more vendors like Upper Deck started producing premium cards. Before 1989,

Topps was the most significant card manufacturer with Fleer and Donruss close behind. In the pre-modern era (before 1989), all of my cards were from Topps, which is still my favorite



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1970s Wax Pack

## The sports card collecting hobby has changed significantly since I started collecting Topps baseball and football cards in 1976.



1970 Rack Pack

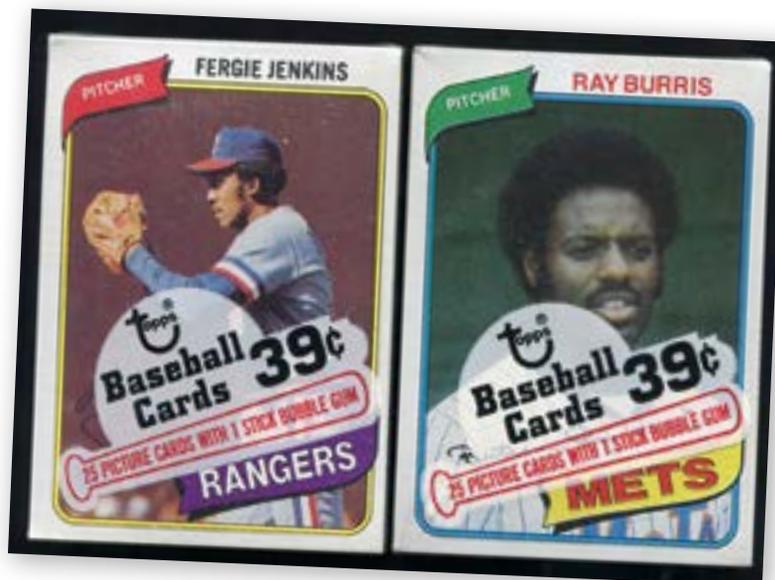
vendor. My goal before 1989, was to always collect and complete sets (every card produced for that year) and multiple cards of my favorite players. Once Upper Deck, etc. started producing cards, there was a boom in card collecting—it became a business. For the average collector, it was now virtually impossible to collect complete sets. Yes, you could always buy the sets from each vendor, but they only included the “base sets” and not every card the vendor produced for the year. I then decided to pivot my card collecting focus to purchasing rookie cards only, or the first card produced for a player as a professional. These cards, unless they are a limited production card, are generally the most valuable card for the player. I would also expand from collecting just baseball and football rookie cards and started collecting hockey, golf, and basketball rookie cards as well. I would continue to collect multiple rookie cards of my favorite players at card shows, card shops, etc. until the late 90s.

With the advent of online auction sites like eBay, which started operations in 1995, it became a

lot easier to acquire specific sports cards that you were looking for. I no longer had to go to card shows and multiple card shops to find the cards that I wanted. Also, online auction sites, through the auction format, changed how sports cards were valued. Before the online auction sites, the low value and high value pricing was established from card shows and published in a publication known as the Beckett Price Guide, which was founded in 1984. With the data coming from

local card shows, the pricing became regional and most card shops would always try to sell the cards at the high value. The auction format gave card collecting worldwide access and helped to establish the fair market value for sports card collecting that is a standard today. The Beckett Price Guide is, to this day, the industry leader in sports card valuation. I have been buying and selling sports cards on eBay since 1998 and expanded my collection greatly during that time.

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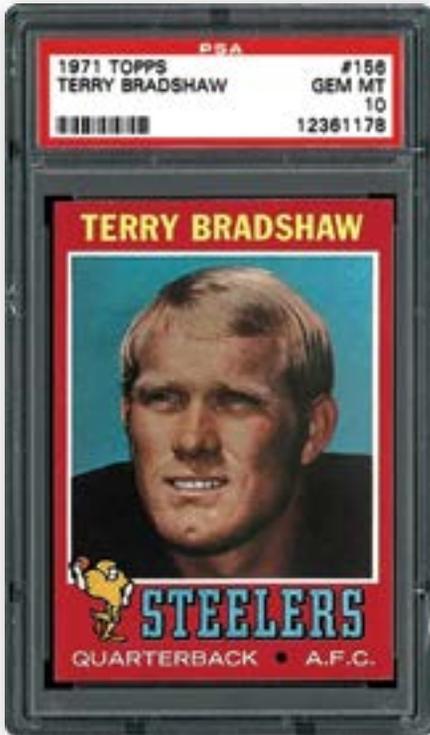


1980 Cello Pack

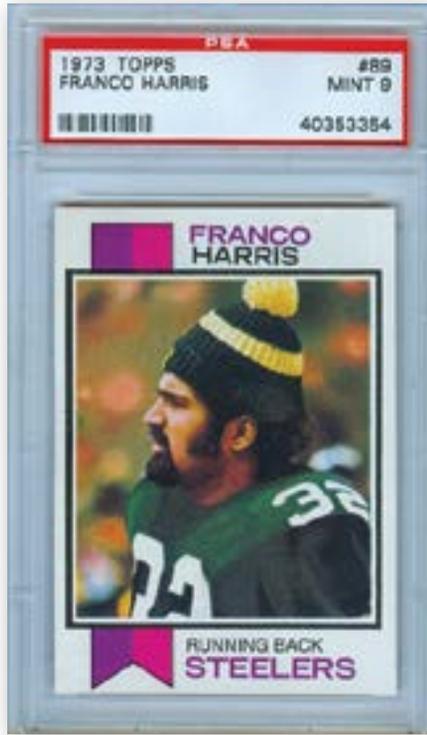
Lastly, the biggest change in sports card collecting, in my opinion, was the introduction of the sports card grading/authentication system by PSA in 1991. Card collecting became

big business and an investment vehicle for some once sports cards could be accurately graded as to the condition of the cards. The grading scale is from 1 to 10 with a 10 being

graded “gem mint” and a 1 being graded as “poor”. I then switched my focus to graded cards and have always tried to acquire the cards in the best graded condition. When I



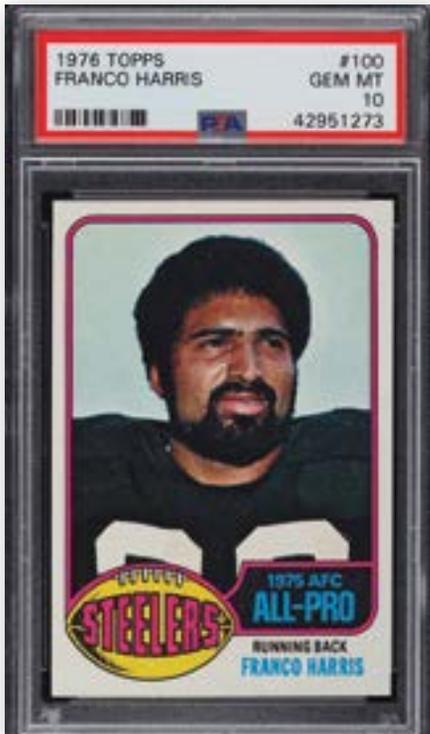
1971 Topps Terry Bradshaw RC



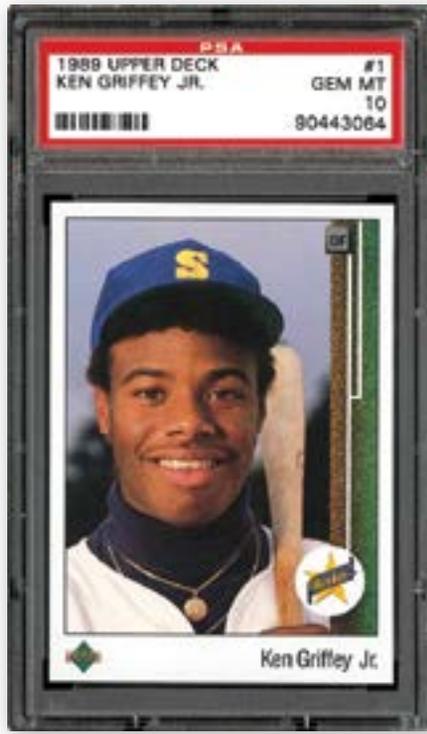
1973 Topps Franco Harris RC



1973 Topps Roberto Clemente



1976 Topps Franco Harris



1989 Upper Deck Ken Griffey Jr. RC



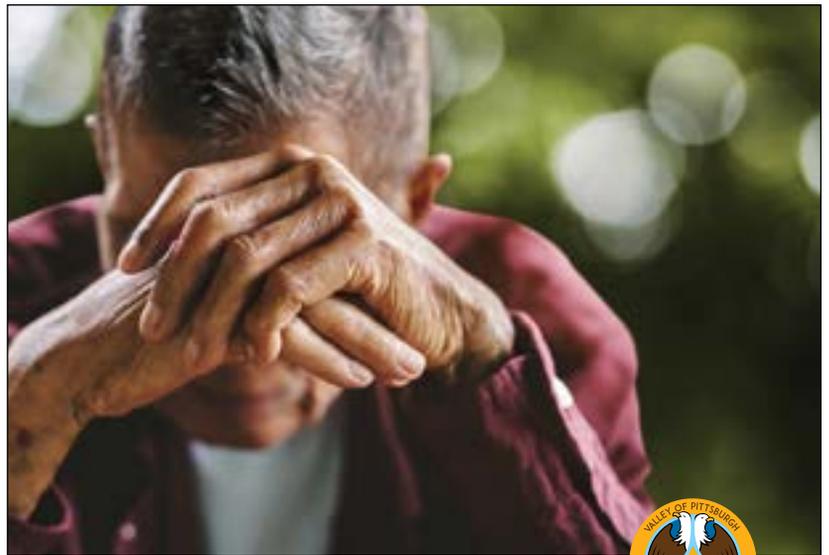
2001 Upper Deck Tiger Woods RC

evaluated my early card collection, I realized that a lot of my cards were damaged from “flipping” them when I was a kid. They might look perfect, but when they get sent in to be graded / authenticated, they most always come back a PSA 7 or “near mint.” In addition to grading cards, PSA also started developing population reports. These population reports keep track of how many each individual cards have been graded and what the grade is. I have many cards where I have the highest grade, a gem mint 10, with low population numbers. The card becomes way more valuable at the highest grade with a low population report.

The sports card collecting hobby has changed significantly since I started collecting Topps baseball and football cards in 1976. Even though all of the new cards are incredibly artistic and cool, I still prefer the old Topps cardboard cards. When I was a kid, I took a chance flipping my favorite card at the time, a 1976 Topps Franco Harris All-Pro card to try and win a 1973 Topps Roberto Clemente card and I was fortunate to win. I still have both of those cards today (seen here). I hope to finish another article that I am writing which will focus on the 1976 Steelers Super Bowl Champion team. This collection, which I refer to as “The ‘76” is a collection of rookie cards only of all the players that played on that team. I have been putting that together for 30 years, and it is a collection of cards that I am really proud of.

My sports card collection makes me smile and continues to do so every day. □

*(left) Several of my favorite rookie cards are designated with an “RC”.*



## Need Assistance?

**No one likes to find themselves in financial hardship.** No one likes to ask for help. However, many Brothers would rather be suspended than ask for the help that we all promised to render to a Brother when we joined the Fraternity. If you need to have your dues remitted this year, please, please, please contact the Office by phone (412-939-3579), by letter (Valley of Pittsburgh, 3579 Masonic Way, Pittsburgh, PA 15237), or by email (secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org). Your request will be kept confidential, and you will continue to be a vital part of our Valley.



## Senior Member Status

**If you are 80-years old or older or are a 50-year plus member,** I would like to remind you that the Scottish Rite does not automatically remit your dues. The Scottish Rite has a program for senior members. The Senior Member Program was implemented to ensure that NO member over the age of 80 (or over 75 with 50 years of membership in the Scottish Rite, NMJ) having financial hardship would be suspended for non-payment. If you qualify for Senior Membership, you will no longer have to pay dues.

If you think you qualify for Senior Member status, please contact the Office by phone (412-939-3579), by letter (Valley of Pittsburgh, 3579 Masonic Way, Pittsburgh, PA 15237), or by email (secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org).

**If you are a caregiver for someone who may qualify, please contact us and let us know of the need.** We are ready, willing, and able to help but can only do so if we are aware of the need.

# The Sovereign

A message from the Sovereign Prince of the Pennsylvania Council of Princes of Jerusalem

PRINCES OF JERUSALEM

## An Unexpected Treat

By Richard F. Kucera, 32°

Having worked in the intensive care unit for many years, I've seen a lot of families at their best and worst. With the privacy laws being what they are, I combine many stories from my years of experience to give a fictionalized version of events I have witnessed during my time as a physician and Scottish Rite Mason.

It was a busy day in the ICU. I was just bringing in a patient who had coded on a hospital unit. I stabilized them and made certain everything was going well. I then got called to another patient who had just arrived from the emergency room. She was unstable and wasn't doing very well. When I arrived at the bedside, her husband was sitting anxiously at her side.

I noticed that he was a Scottish Rite Mason. The husband was very concerned (and rightfully so) about his loved one. I pointed to his Scottish Rite ring and asked him which Valley he belonged to. He told me and I shared that I had recently become a Scottish Rite Mason as well. What struck me at that moment was that an instant trust and bond had developed.

Over the next several hours, I worked diligently to stabilize the

patient. I told her husband that she would do well, and we would all get through this awful event. When I would make my rounds in the mornings, he was always there during visiting hours. He would ask all the appropriate questions, and I would explain what the plans were for that day. I would assure him that I truly believed that she was going to make a full recovery but that we just had to be patient.

What struck me at that moment was that an instant trust and bond had developed.

One day when I was on rounds, the nurses had told him of my strong love of cookies. He stated that his wife made excellent cookies. "Then she absolutely has to make it

through this," I told him.

Over the next several weeks, the patient finally improved. We were able to discharge her to a unit where she would slowly gain her strength back. Typically, after patients would leave the ICU, I would never hear from them again. Approximately six months later, a box of cookies appeared on my desk at the office. I quickly realized who they were from—that patient from many months ago in the ICU. I took a bite of the cookie. Her husband was absolutely right: She does make delicious cookies. It was an unexpected treat that made me smile.



Richard F. Kucera, 32°  
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Approximately six months later, a box of cookies appeared on my desk at the office.

When you can trust the people that you're working with in a crisis (who just moments earlier were complete strangers), the bond of brotherhood brings a calming influence which is able to improve the situation and usually bring a better outcome, whatever the problem may be. Many times, it even leads to lasting relationships.

I fully believe that every physician would be better served to have learned the lessons that are taught in the degrees of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry. Following these lessons would improve relationships in caring for the sick, giving them and their families better outcomes in difficult times. □



# TheWise

A message from the Most Wise Master of the Pittsburgh Chapter Rose Croix

ROSE CROIX

## Remembering a Brother

By Jordan L. Frei, 32°

Call me a Scrooge if you like, but I don't smile much during the holiday season.

I have always had a love/hate relationship with Christmas and Hannukah. In the days that follow, I normally find myself a few extra pounds heavier, having received gifts that I really didn't need and spent money I really didn't have. Nevertheless, the assignment for this issue is Things That Make Me Smile, and this is scheduled for print in December.

I know, my holiday outlook is poor, and I shouldn't see it that way. So, I usually grin and bear it and keep my mouth shut (most of the time) around my family and friends. But then 2016 happened, and I had the opportunity to meet Brother Matthew Boice, PM and PMWM.

It was the closing days of my term as Worshipful Master of Ligonier Lodge No. 331. I was proud of my service as I spent the year working hard to bridge the gaps between the way things were always done and some new ideas and programs. Though it was a labor of love, it was a labor indeed, and I was tired.

On Christmas Eve of that year, a contact was made to our lodge

secretary. A 60-year member who was living in Florida had passed. Having served in the U.S. Navy, this member was to be buried in the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies in Bridgeville, where a Masonic Funeral Service would take place.

It's eighty miles between Ligonier and Bridgeville. The funeral service was scheduled for midday on a

Wednesday, three days after Christmas. Between the distance and time of year, I knew the turnout from our lodge would be lacking. Yet, I owed it to my fellow Brother to honor him the best way possible.

Like many, I take the Masonic funeral service very seriously. It is

one of the only ritual-based things that we do in public. In the mind of a grieving spouse, son, or daughter, it may serve as an explainer as to what their husband or father did when he left the house for a Masonic function. So, despite the challenges, I was committed to making certain that a proper Masonic service was performed, and I reached out to our District Deputy, who connected me with members from the Bridgeville area.

This was how I met Brother Boice.

He and his cohorts met me at the

Everything he did on stage, including the conferral of the 18th degree, was done with a confident, uplifting tone.



Jordan L. Frei, 32°

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## Just being around him made you a better man and a better Mason.

cemetery and conducted the service. His work was flawless, and his delivery embodied a solemn and calm, yet captivating demeanor.

Months later, I began my tenure as a Pittsburgh Chapter of Rose Croix officer. Two officer's chairs ahead of me sat my new friend in Freemasonry—the guy with the handlebar mustache who helped me out at the Cemetery of the Alleghenies.

My appreciation of Matt grew stronger as the years and Scottish Rite performances progressed.

It turns out that Brother Matthew's tone and delivery was not just reserved for funerals. Everything he did on stage, including the conferral of the 18th degree, was done with a confident, uplifting tone. Soft spoken yet endearing.

This can also describe Brother Matthew's general attitude in any social situation that I was fortunate enough to be in his presence for. He spoke with incomparable wisdom and honesty. He asked you about your family or your profession out of general concern and spoke freely about his life. Just being around him made you a better man and a better Mason.

This past August, I returned to Washington County to pay my respects and honor the life of Brother Matt after his sudden passing. As

a member of his lodge performed a great Masonic funeral service, I could think only of my first encounter with Brother Boice. His approach to Masonic and Scottish Rite performance was similar to his approach to life, passionate while still calm.

Were I not a Mason or not taken the responsibility of serving in the East, I may have never met Matthew Boice. But I did and I am better for it.

And remembering him makes me smile. □



# The Office

A message from the Secretary of the Valley of Pittsburgh

VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH

## A Note From the Secretary

By David W. Morgans, 33°

**Greetings** Brethren. Winter is an interesting season. The daylight hours are shorter than what we enjoy in the summer. The longer hours of darkness can sometimes have a negative impact on our moods. Of course, there are extremes to this change in mood such as Seasonal Affective Disorder that may require professional attention, but for those who just feel a little blah, there are things that can be done to make yourself feel more attached and vital this winter.

First, it generally makes people feel better when they turn their attention toward helping others.

The Blue Envelope appeal letter went out several weeks ago to all Scottish Rite Masons in our jurisdiction.

This program is a way in which Scottish Rite Masons can help others by making donations to the Scottish Rite Charities that keep the philanthropic spirit of Freemasonry alive and well. A donation to The Blue Envelope program helps so many people.

Your donation to the Blue Envelope campaign doesn't just help those who receive help throughout the jurisdiction, it also helps locally in the Valley of Pittsburgh. Each Valley is awarded Abbott scholarship money based on the number of its

members who contribute to The Blue Envelope appeal. Last year 268 of our members donated to the campaign, allowing our Valley to award six Abbott Scholarships. So far this year, 129 members have donated. Additionally, the Valley receives points toward the Valley

of Excellence, which we earned last year, for each member who donates. With your help, we can surpass last year's number of contributors and earn another Valley of Excellence award for our current Scottish Rite year. If you want to lift yourself up, consider donating to this wonderful

campaign. Please visit [DonateRite.org](http://DonateRite.org) to donate.

If you would like your donation to be used specifically for Valley of Pittsburgh members, then please consider a donation to the Valley Hospitalers. The Hospitalers use these funds to care for our membership. These dedicated men call on and visit our members who are ill, injured, or homebound. They send cards and cookies. They provide beds, wheelchairs, scooters, and other medical items when necessary. They may also provide financial assistance in times of hardship as well as help to offset dues payments from members who need to have their dues remitted.

A great way to fight off the winter blahs is to get engaged with the Scottish Rite.



**David W. Morgans, 33°**  
secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org

Your unselfish gifts are being used to serve your Brothers in the Valley.

A second way to fight off the winter blahs is to get engaged with the Scottish Rite. Not all engagement requires leaving your home. The Supreme Council will again offer the Thursday Night at The Rite program starting in January 2023. These degree presentations are a great way to continue your journey in the Scottish Rite, to enjoy some great degree work, and to learn more about our beloved Fraternity. Make sure you are enrolled in the Member Center on the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction's website at [ScottishRiteNMJ.org](http://ScottishRiteNMJ.org). From the Member Center you can also start your Pathfinder journey. This is a self-paced program that helps you learn more and experience more in the Scottish Rite. Pathfinder takes you on a journey that uses both in-person and online activities. It's a great way to stay engaged.

A third way to beat the blues is to use some of your time to serve others. The Valley of Pittsburgh needs good men who care about their Brothers to serve as Valley Ambassadors to their home lodge as well as Brothers who would like to be part of the Brother to Brother program.

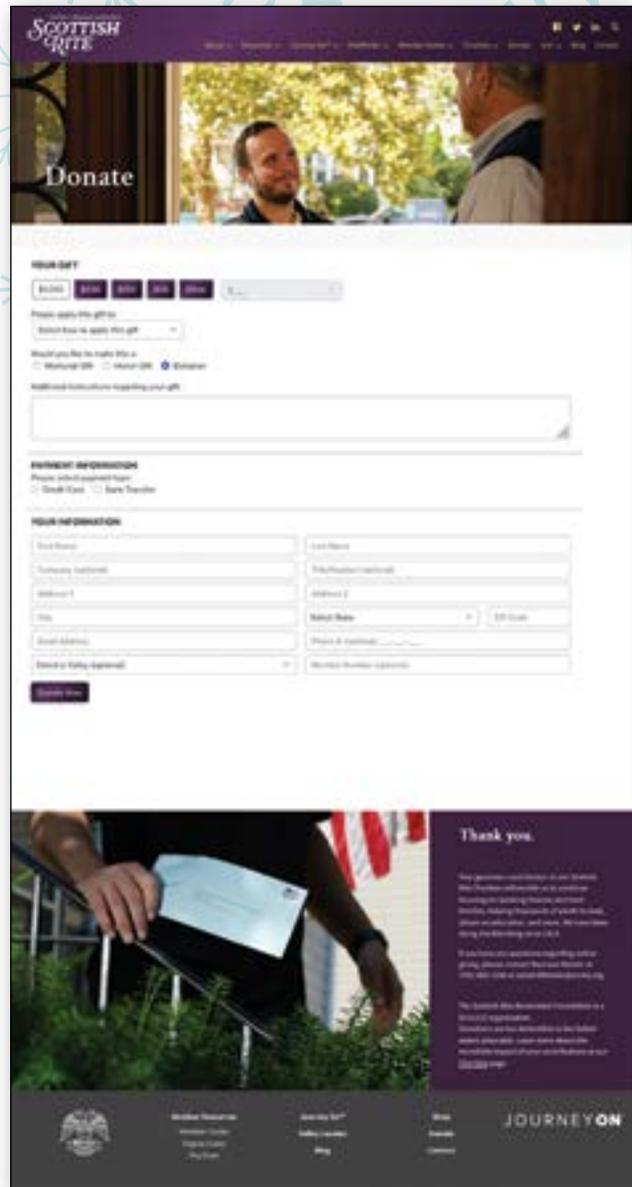
Valley Ambassadors attend lodge meetings and share with the assembled Brethren what's going on in the Valley of Pittsburgh. Ambassadors keep our members informed, and they supply information and personal contact for Masons who would like to join the Scottish Rite.

Brother to Brother committee members reach out to our membership through phone calls, emails, cards, etc. This is NOT a dues collection program. It is a program designed to be in direct contact with our members to let them know that we, as Brothers, care for them and are interested in their lives. Each Ambassador and member of the Brother to Brother committee will be given the proper resources to help you be successful. If you are interested in either of these programs, please contact the office and we will get you plugged into either or both of these vital programs.

A fourth way to improve your spirits is to engage with your Brothers at the many events in the Valley of Pittsburgh. In the winter, we have holiday events, stated meetings, degree work, and fellowship opportunities. Look out for details on our new Valley Rite Nite which will offer a wide range of activities throughout the year on the first Thursday of the months we do not have stated meetings. These events will be

advertised in our meeting notices, on our website, and through broadcast emails. If you are not receiving Valley emails, please either register in the Member Center and update your email address, or contact the office to let us know your email address.

Don't let the winter months get you down. Let the Scottish Rite lift you up! ☐



# Our Youth

News and information about the Masonic Youth in our Valley

## Pennsylvania DeMolay at 100 Years

In March of 1919, DeMolay International was formed in Kansas City, Missouri. The organization takes its name from Jacques DeMolay, the last Grand Master of the Order of the Knights Templar. Even under torture, DeMolay refused to betray those he considered Brothers by giving up their names. It was upon this principle that “Dad” Frank S. Land, employee of the Scottish Rite in Kansas City, Missouri, and nine young men decided to form the organization we know as the Order of DeMolay.

There will be many opportunities to celebrate throughout the year. We started with an induction class in December, celebrating all the Past State Master Councilors of Pennsylvania DeMolay. The leaders who served the Commonwealth throughout the years welcomed several young men to DeMolay. They had the chance to communicate with the new DeMolays and share stories that these young men can look back on for years.

As a tribute to the celebration, the R.W. Grand Master, Jeffrey M. Wondering, a DeMolay Advisor and Honorary Member of DeMolay International, filled his 2023 Grand Line of Officers with Senior DeMolays from across Pennsylvania. This took effect at the December Quarterly Communication. The 2023 Grand Master’s Medallion is struck in honor of Pennsylvania DeMolay’s Anniversary.

Another celebration that will be taking place will be held in conjunction with the Grand Communication in June at the Masonic Villages in Elizabethtown. A banquet will be held, and the R.W. Grand Master will be hosting a special celebration with the members of DeMolay, both from the past and the present. PA DeMolay will also hold another celebration at its annual Convention the weekend of July 15th in Cranberry Township. Other ways we will celebrate the anniversary will include a commemorative 100th anniversary book, special merchandise such as ties, and social media and website posts reminding us of our history. Our celebration will come to a close with a statewide induction of new members to be held in honor of R.W. Grand Master Wonderling on December 2nd. Celebrate with us, as we remember 100 years of one of the greatest youth leadership organizations in Pennsylvania. □



[pademolay.org](http://pademolay.org)

“Youth has no age.” —Pablo Picasso

## Happy Birthday

**Founded** in 1922, the International Order of Rainbow for Girls is celebrating its 100th Birthday. At Grand Assembly 2022, we celebrated with rainbow cupcakes, fun, and fellowship. During our Bi-Annual Supreme Assembly this past summer, there was a VERY big birthday party with Rainbow Girls from around the world. In addition to the United States, Rainbow is in eight other countries including Aruba, Australia, Canada, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Romania, plus four separate jurisdictions in Brazil. A new jurisdiction is currently being formed in Panama.

## Service

**One** of the seven lessons of Rainbow’s Initiation ceremony is ... Service. Service is represented by the color Violet, the only ray of light that has healing power. The lesson reminds us to “be of some service each day.”

All local Western Rainbow Assemblies do separate community service. Here are two recent events where the girls worked together for the good of the community while having fun and fellowship. First, they made dog pull-toys out of old, donated tee-shirts, to be given to humane shelters. And second, they made no-pill fleece tie-blankets to be donated to local veteran’s hospitals, women’s shelters, and homeless shelters.

These are just a few things that make us smile.

For more information go to [www.gorainbow.org](http://www.gorainbow.org) or contact Mrs. Helen Snedden, Supreme Immortality and Supreme Inspector for PA Rainbow at [hsnedden@aol.com](mailto:hsnedden@aol.com). □



[parainbowgirls.org](http://parainbowgirls.org)

# The Center

A message from the Director of the Children's Dyslexia Center—Pittsburgh

VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH

## ▶ Changing Lives

By Patricia Broskey

There are many individual moments that make us smile, but our biggest smiles come from knowing that we have changed the lives of countless students and, as a result, the lives of their families.

- Parents tell us about the first time that their child tries to read a word unprompted.
- Parents are thrilled, and often emotional, the first time they see a child pick up a book and read on their own. This is a picture-worthy moment.
- Parents come back and tell us when their children are doing well in school. We hear about the first time they pass their test without tears.
- We hear about high school students taking AP classes and getting great PSSA/PSAT scores.
- When the students no longer need to be in pull-out classes but can join their classmates in a regular classroom, it's a huge achievement!
- When students tell us they've graduated from college with a cumulative 4.0 and choose to become a teacher.

We smile when we talk about our recent surge in numbers. We've been able to increase our numbers to 32 students on site and six being tutored offsite. We have trained 15 new tutors and are also in the midst of an offsite training for teachers. The ripples in the pond from these numbers are immeasurable.

In the end, we smile when we think about all of this taking place because of the support of the Masons. None of this would be able to happen without your generous gifts of money, time, and resources!

We hope you and your families have a wonderful holiday season and we look forward to even more growth in 2023! □



For more information:

**412-931-3181**

**Patricia Broskey**, Director  
[pittsburgh@cdcinc.org](mailto:pittsburgh@cdcinc.org)



# Builders Council

Benefactors of the Children's Dyslexia Center-Pittsburgh

The ability to read is the foundation of each child's future. It provides the base upon which all learning depends. Membership in the Builders Council means that you have made a commitment to assure that our Children's Dyslexia Center will be able to help children with dyslexia today and for years to come.

Joining the Builders Council is achieved through a commitment of \$10,000 by one of the following methods:

- **Pledging monthly/annual gifts for a period lasting no longer than 10 years**

- **Naming the Children's Dyslexia Center in your will**
- **Making a bequest to the Children's Dyslexia Center**
- **Establishing an annuity or trust**

## BUILDERS COUNCIL MEMBERS

30th Masonic District F&AM  
Demo Agoris  
Edward & Joan Aiello  
Robert and Janice Amend  
Emery & Carol Anden  
Avalon Lodge No. 657 F&AM  
David & Carol Bagaley  
Robert & Jacqueline Beatty  
Dr. Jeff A. Biddle  
Mark & Patty Bliler  
Chartiers Lodge No. 297 F&AM  
George H. Cox  
Rick & Renee Cross  
James S. Dean  
Mario & Linda Deblasio  
Bill & Heather Dickey  
Raymond T. Dietz  
Fred & Kathy Donatelli  
Robert L. Eckbreth  
James Ecker  
James R. Flanigan  
Howard and Sharon Flynn  
Franklin / St. John's / Trinity Lodge No. 221  
Gourgias Lodge of Perfection  
Donald & Debra Green  
Wally and Leah Grossett  
Erich & Raylene Gumto  
Harvey & Carol Gumto  
John A. Habel  
Leland A. Hale Jr.  
Jacque Hauser  
Jeff & Lauren Heiger  
Helen Ruth Henderson  
Raymond Frank Hess  
Hiram's Riders of Valley of Pittsburgh  
Gene Hlavac

Homestead Amity McCandless  
Lodge No. 582  
Infinity Lodge No. 546  
Jim & Lisa Jenkins  
Robert B. Jones  
Paul Kappel  
Paul and Jackie Kauffman  
David & Sandy Kearns  
David S. & Judith Kielman  
John G. Kovac  
Richard & Mary Ruth Kucera  
George & Judith Lewis  
Lodge 45, Pittsburgh, P.A.  
William & Barabara Magnotti Jr.  
Frank R. Mangery  
Jack W. & Edna Marsh  
John McCain  
John F. McCombs  
Roy A. & Sara Jane McCullough  
Julia and Calvin McCutcheon  
Jay E. McElravy  
Joann McElravy  
James A. & Earlene McMahon  
Craig & Amy McVicker  
Mike Melde  
Dr. Glenn & Roberta Miller  
Glenn D. & Mary B. Miller  
Jack & Carol Miller  
Donald M. Murphy  
Jack & Joy Nicklas  
John & Valerie Nicklas  
Oakdale Lodge No. 669  
Pittsburgh Commandery No. 1  
Knights Templar  
Ronald and Karen Plesh  
Raymond R. & Dorothy K. James

D. William Roberts  
Bruce A. Robinson  
Richard & Bette Rodibaugh  
Don & Ginny Sauer  
Joseph A. Schrock Jr.  
James W. Seel  
William P. Shaw  
William Slater  
Samuel & Judith Spanos  
Steel City DeMolay - Coraopolis, PA  
Christian L. Stein  
Thomas Sturgeon  
Kurt R. Tesche  
The Supreme Council Group  
Valley of Pittsburgh  
Gregory Triko  
Unified Lodge #2 I.O.O.F.  
Valley of Pittsburgh Legion of Honor  
Valley of Uniontown  
George T. Vance  
Vintage-Classic Car Club  
S. Timothy Warco  
Washington Lodge No. 164  
Bob & Charlene Wells  
Chester Arthur West Jr.  
Louri Ann West  
John & Jerry Williams  
Jeffrey & Sharon Wonderling



Upon the Checkered Pavement



# All the Small Things

by D. Todd Ballenger, 33°





D. Todd Ballenger, 33°

**“Isn’t it enough to see that a garden is beautiful without having to believe that there are fairies at the bottom of it, too?”**—Douglas Adams

► **Once again,** I find myself moving through the holiday season just trying to keep my head clear of the cacophony of commercialism. Admit it—this is the time of year when nearly everything you see or hear involves a sparkly pitch or shiny surprise within a neatly wrapped package, and that is fully intended to be the source of joy and happiness for the duration of the calendar year. The thing is, it is getting harder and harder to tell one celebration from another once autumn begins. But in the push for everything to be bigger and louder during the holidays, I find the greatest satisfaction in my family and all that we have accomplished together.

For me, it isn’t a matter of one or two really big things that stick out in my fraternal memories, but all the small things. Think of it as a cornucopia of good times with my Masonic family—really my extended family—that provide a bounty of goodness for which I am eternally thankful. Snippets and recollections of my favorite things may only last a moment but provide years of smiles long after the moment is past. I recall being a new District Deputy and going to dinner with all of the Deputies from Region 4 on a snowy night in Western Pennsylvania. Some other Grand Lodge friends of ours happened to be in town, and we invited them to come along. Being a new Deputy is challenging enough, but when your friends introduce the Eastern PA Deputy’s wife by a completely fictitious name and the “new guy” calls her that for *nearly two years*, you get a core memory—and a funny one at that.

Laughing with my Masonic family is a welcome theme, and those brief moments of joy can make for lasting

recollections. Playing golf every New Year’s Day with our small band of quipsters in the rain, snow, and, believe it or not, occasional sun has provided smiles for more than a decade. Accolades shared with family, friends, and mentors also stand out as notable milestones. Receiving my Thrice Potent Master’s jewel from my wife and my 33rd degree ring from Right Worshipful Past Grand Master Thomas Sturgeon are two I won’t soon forget. The same goes for the honor of presenting my father-in-law and mentor with his 50-year Masonic Service Award with Right Worshipful Past Grand Master Robert Bateman—one of my first official acts as a new District Deputy.



Having a penchant for ritual and stage work in the Scottish Rite, I cannot overstate the happiness that comes to me from working with my Brothers. What





# Understanding Medicare

## Part 2

By Kristin M. Douglas, MBA, 32°





Kristin M. Douglas, 32°

Given the importance of the topic to many of our members, it was decided to run an update with 2022's facts and figures.

## In the last issue,

we covered the basics of Medicare and the timeframes for signing up for services. This installment will cover the different options that are available to you once you have signed up for Medicare. As mentioned previously, after you have enrolled in Parts A and B, you then must decide on whether to stick with original Medicare, take out a Supplement/Gap plan, or go with a Medicare Advantage plan. We will also discuss Part D Prescription Drug plans and how they interact with each. Let's dive back in by first going over the Medigap or Supplement plans.

### What is a Medigap Policy?

Medigap or Medicare Supplement Insurance policies are sold by private companies. They complement original Medicare by filling in the gaps or paying for items such as deductibles, coinsurance, and copayments. The plans are standardized in all but three states (Minnesota, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin). All plans with the same letter have identical coverage. For instance, if you purchase a Plan G from insurance company A, it will cover exactly the same benefits as one from insurance company B. The only difference between the two will be the premium that you pay each month.

Medigap/Supplement policies are guaranteed renewable. As long as you pay your premium, they

cannot cancel your coverage. They can, however, raise your premium each year. Another nice feature with gap policies is that there is no network to adhere to. You are free to utilize any provider across the nation. If they accept Medicare, they will accept your plan. Medigap plans only work with Original Medicare. You must continue to pay your Part B premium each month in addition to these plans. If you have other coverage (Medicare Advantage, employer or union), you may not need a Medigap plan. Most Medigap plans do not include vision, dental, hearing, or gym memberships. Gap policies also do not include prescription drug coverage, so a stand-alone plan for drugs will be necessary.

Most Medigap plans do not include vision, dental, hearing, or gym memberships.

Beginning the month you turn 65 AND are enrolled in Part B, you have a one-time 6-month window to enroll in a Medigap plan with no questions asked. Remember, you can delay enrollment in Part B if you have other credible coverage. Your open enrollment period for your Medigap plan would thus begin once you elect to take your Part B. Again, this period gives you a one-time only guaranteed right to buy any Medigap policy sold in your state regardless of

your health status. In most cases, once this period starts, it cannot be delayed or restarted. If you do not enroll into a Medigap plan during the Open Enrollment Period, there may be restrictions once you decide to sign up. These can include answering health questions that may lead to the insurer denying coverage.

### **What is a Medicare Advantage Plan?**

Medicare Advantage plans are health plan options (like PPOs and HMOs) that are approved by Medicare and run by private companies. The plans are part of the Medicare program and provide Medicare-covered benefits. They often include additional benefits such as prescription drug coverage, dental, vision, gym memberships, and more. The plans are also referred to as Part C. When utilizing a Medicare Advantage plan, you receive Medicare services through the plan. You are still in the Medicare program and you continue to enjoy all rights and protections of original Medicare. The plans work with a network of doctors and hospitals. The benefits provided and cost sharing may differ from Original Medicare. A few things to keep in mind with Advantage plans are that plan benefits and cost sharing can vary between providers and that they are not guaranteed renewable. If the plan leaves Medicare, you can then join another Medicare Advantage plan or return to original Medicare.

To join a Medicare Advantage Plan, you must have Parts A and B. You will also continue to pay your Part B premium each month. Unlike Medigap policies, Advantage plans require the use of a network of doctors and hospitals and you may need

a referral to see a specialist. Most of the plans offer comprehensive coverage and many offer prescription drug coverages as well. Also, you can only join and leave the plans during certain periods. Please keep in mind that Advantage plans DO NOT work with Medigap policies.

### **Part D Prescription Drug Coverage**

Part D prescription drug coverage is optional. However, if you do not have credible prescription drug coverage, you may face a penalty if you attempt to enroll later in life. Credible coverage includes that which you may have through the Veterans Administration (VA), an employer, or through the State Pharmaceutical Assistance Program (PACE). As mentioned above, many Medicare Advantage plans include Part D coverage. Medigap plans, however, do not, so a separate stand-alone drug plan will need to be added.

### **Enrollment in Medicare Advantage Plans and Part D Plans**

The timeframe for enrolling in a Medicare Advantage plan or a Part D stand-alone prescription drug plan is the same. The first occurs during the 7-month Initial Enrollment Period when you first turn 65 and are taking Part B. Another period occurs every year during the Annual Enrollment Period from October 15 through December 7. Coverage begins January 1. There are also Special Enrollment Periods that you must qualify for that allow you to make changes to your plans. Also, between January 1 and March 31, certain changes can be made during the Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period.

## Extra Help and Part D

There are programs available to help cope with the costs of your prescription drugs. Many seniors on a fixed income find paying for their prescription drugs to be their biggest challenge.

To see if you qualify for extra help on your prescription drugs, call:

- Medicare at 1-800-Medicare (1-800-633-4227)
- Social Security at 1-800-772-1213

To see if you qualify for PACE or PACENET, call:

- PA Department of Aging at 1-800-225-7223
- Enroll online at <https://pacecares.magellanhealth.com>

To see if you qualify for Veterans Administration (VA) benefits:

- Apply at your local VA facility
- Apply online at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

## Bringing it Together

As you can see, turning 65 and going on Medicare for the first time can be a little unnerving. With a basic understanding of how the different parts work and which plans and options are available, you can make a more informed choice in selecting the best route forward for you and your family. I hope that this article helped make some of Medicare's basic framework more understandable, I also hope it is now clearer which coverage options are available to you and how and when to go about signing up for them. □

Unlike Medigap policies, Advantage plans require the use of a network of doctors and hospitals and you may need a referral to see a specialist.





Because

It

Happened.

by PJ Roup, 33°



PJ Roup, 33°

## Don't cry because it's over. Smile because *it* happened.

► **If the internet** is good for one thing, it's making us all feel like we're smart. I did a quick Google search to see whom I should credit for the epigraph of this column. Dr. Seuss. Done. I typed it at the end of the quote. *Wait, I thought, maybe if I read it in context it will give me even more inspiration for this article.*

> don't cry because it's over Seuss book context

That's what I typed next. Well, that opened up a rabbit hole that took me about an hour to crawl out of. Apparently, it has been attributed to Dr. Seuss, Gabriel García Márquez (*"No llores porque ya se terminó, sonríe porque sucedió"*), and a smattering of valedictorians around the country.

It turns out, however (if one chooses to believe quoteinvestigator.com), that Ludwig Jacobowski said something close to it in an 1899 literary journal when he wrote:

Nicht weinen, weil sie vorüber!  
Lächeln, weil sie gewesen!

The English translation (again, if quoteinvestigator.com is to be believed) is:

Do not cry because they are past!  
Smile, because they once were!

Close enough I guess, though I like the Seussified version for its lyric quality.

No matter what language you prefer to hear it in or who gets credit for it, it's a sentiment we can all relate to on at least some level. For me, the most obvious application is the Masonic funeral service. While it can be difficult to say

goodbye to Brothers who have, because of Freemasonry, become members of your extended family, we can be uplifted by the assurance that we will certainly meet again. On that note, one of the greatest honors I have had was to deliver one of the eulogies for Illustrious Brother Sam Williamson (see *RiteNow*, Summer 2022).

While it is never easy to lose a close friend and mentor,



I cannot help but smile when I think of the time spent with Sam and others now departed. So many who have been taken from our ranks have played the role of counselor, conciliator, coach, comic, or critic for me. It never mattered what the role was (it was always the one called for at the

moment); it was just comforting to know that someone was there to offer help in whatever form it was needed.

In my quarter century of Freemasonry, there have been a million other reasons to smile.

First, it gives me great pride to be part of a Masonic family. I joined the Lodge because of my grandfather.

We never spoke of Masonry, but when I learned of his membership, I wanted to attach myself to a group that included men like him—men of honor, integrity, and pride.



A few years later, our Lodge was holding an open house and my dad asked if he could attend. “Of course,” I told him. “I never asked you because I wasn’t sure it was your cup of tea,” I added sheepishly.

**In** my quarter century of Freemasonry, there have been a million other reasons to smile.

“I wasn’t either,” he replied. “But after seeing what it has done for you, I think I ought to belong.” I’m not sure if those were his exact words, but that was the sentiment he expressed, and it stands out as the beginning of the series of my proudest Masonic moment—the Entering, Passing, and Raising of my dad during my term as Worshipful Master. Twenty years and a whole lot of Masonic titles later, it’s still at the top of the list.

Another thing that makes me smile is my membership in the Scottish Rite. Coincidentally and fortuitously, as I was writing this article, I received an email from the Supreme Council congratulating me on my 15th anniversary in Scottish Rite. I can still remember that day. Within seconds of registering on Friday night, Jim Flanigan conscripted me to sing in the choir. I will admit it was a little surreal to be both witnessing and taking part in the degrees for the first time, but it’s a memory that I cherish to this day.

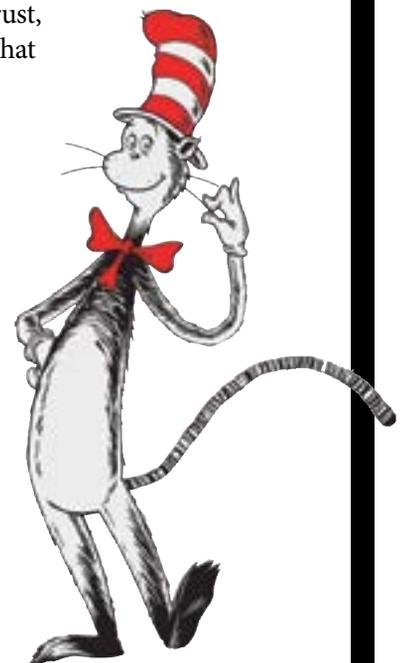
A lot has changed in the Valley of Pittsburgh since then. Several of those great men I met that weekend and in the years that followed are gone, but their memories live on.

They come back to us in the stories we share. They live again in the pictures we see. But most of all, they find life as part of the living fabric that is the Valley of Pittsburgh. Each of you—each of us—is a thread. What we have contributed by our talent, our treasure, or our presence has become part of the rich tapestry of this Valley—the oldest in Pennsylvania. I cannot help but smile when I think of the Sublime Princes, both living and dead, who have made this Valley what it is today.

I said there were a million reasons to smile. Those were just few of them, but nestled in between are the rest: times of pure honesty with Brothers you know you can trust, memorable instants of ritual that went either incredibly well or disastrously but will live on as defining moments in my journey, and thousands of laughs over food or drinks with other men who have chosen to travel this road we call Freemasonry.

It would be very easy to cry tears of joy or tears of sorrow when I recall those events, but I choose instead to smile.

Because it happened. □



# TheWord

Observations from Brother and Reverend David A. Eichelberger, 32°

## QUIET SATISFACTION

When our Illustrious editor informed us of this issue's theme, I imagined that he was looking for some of those "Hallmark moment" events which would make us all sit back in our easy chairs and say, *Ah, aren't Freemasons wonderful people!* To be sure, we are due for some self-congratulation, for as our Right Worshipful Grand Master, Jeffery M. Wonderling, has been telling us, most Freemasons in Pennsylvania do not know all the good that we are doing for so many people in need across our Commonwealth.

I knew in my heart that he was indeed the sort of man we wanted in our lodge.

However, I think we want to go deeper than that, in that we know that many who are not Masons do kind deeds for others. I was reminded of that one night after my lodge meeting when my car failed to start. The gauge said I had plenty of gas, the battery had plenty of charge, and the starter turned the engine, but nothing happened when I turned the key. I was flummoxed. One by one, my lodge Brethren waved and left for their homes when a candidate for our lodge stopped and asked if I was having a problem. I explained my predicament, and he graciously went out of his way to drive me from one gas station to another to find a container



for gasoline. I was hoping I had a bit of bad gas at the bottom of my tank. After several fruitless hours and many miles, I sent him home and called AAA to request a tow truck.

He was not a Mason yet, but I knew in my heart that he was indeed the sort of man we wanted in our lodge. He didn't know me, but like him, I have been able to go the extra mile to help my Brethren and others I didn't know when they were in need. My reward was to see them be able to get on with their lives and help others by passing it on. One family sent me word their daughter was able to graduate from nursing school recently. Another finished his degree program and is teaching in his field in a new state. Still another friend I helped sends pictures of the progress he has made since the catastrophe that struck several years ago and the recovery that has since occurred.

There are many others I have helped that I will never know anything about. The money we give to the Almoner's funds, the Blue Envelope program, the Hospitaler's fund, and our Grand Lodge dues are all entrusted to officers who will do their best with the money we give them to help others in need. We all can take quiet satisfaction in knowing that thousands

will be in a better place because Freemasonry has blessed individual Freemasons like us to open our hearts and wallets to care for others in need. □





Austin R. Shifrin, 33°

# Masonic Moments

by Austin Shifrin, 33°

**There have been so many Masonic moments that have made me smile that it's difficult to narrow it down to one to share with you. But I'm going to tell you about a few very special ones strung together.**

A few years ago, I flew to Florida to visit with my mom, my stepdad, and my grandmother. I was at my mom and stepdad's apartment in Long Boat Key. When I visited them, I would stay in their home office on a futon. I had taken a very early morning flight. I always preferred taking two flights to get one that would put me in Sarasota / Bradenton airport, a short drive to their home, rather than flying direct into some larger airport and then having a 2-hour drive ahead of me. All of this is just to say I had been on my feet since something like 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning and needed a rest.

The room had white carpet, a pale-yellow pinstripe wallpaper, and there was this mid-century modern lounge chair with a matching ottoman. I think the leather had once been royal blue, but it got a touch faded over the years. It was my stepdad's favorite. And with good reason, because it was terribly comfortable. After I greeted them and we shared some small talk regarding the flight, I retreated to "the office" and commandeered the armchair for a quick nap.

Although I don't know how long it was, I was sound asleep when I felt my cell phone vibrate. Taking it from my pocket, I saw the call was coming from my friend

and District Deputy at the time, PJ Roup. Groggy, but curious what the circumstances might be, I answered the call. After a buoyant greeting, PJ congratulated me and informed me that I had been elected to receive the 33rd degree in Scottish Rite Freemasonry. In my stupor, emerging from the fog of sleep, I grappled with what I had just heard: *Did he just say I'm getting my 33rd? Is this a prank? Is PJ pranking me? Would he do that? He might...*

**In my stupor, emerging from the fog of sleep, I grappled with what I had just heard.**

I think I might have even been unresponsive for a moment, but with a chuckle, PJ proceeded to congratulate me again and told me he was about to pass the phone on to someone else. As I spoke briefly with one friend after another—men I knew and respected in the Fraternity—I had the slowly dawning realization that *this was actually happening*, and I became as elated as the Brothers who whooped and hollered, advised and counseled, each in their own unique fashion, on the other end of the line.

So, that would have been late summer/early fall of 2018. And on August 27th, 2019, at the 207th annual meeting of the Supreme Council of the NMJ, in Milwaukee, I received the 33rd degree. Are there things about that experience I can't share with everyone? Well, sure. But I'm going to tell you (somewhat obliquely) about another



moment in my life that took place there. If you have experienced it yourself, you will recognize immediately what I'm talking about; and if you haven't yet, but are fortunate enough to experience it someday, I hope you will look back on this article and say "Aha, this is what Austin was rattling on about... and he was right, too."

When I walked into the room where I was to receive that degree, I felt the most overwhelming sensation of support and recognition that I think I have ever known. The way that these Brothers showed their respect and appreciation was almost too much to process. It was a singular, incomparable experience. The degree that followed it was surprising, intriguing, stimulating, and memorable. But that moment of arrival set the stage so fittingly, it is its own truly indelible memory.

And that is what brings me to two other moments that I wished to share with you. Because now that I have had those experiences, I can say that it brings me a whole different pleasure to be part of that experience for other men. In Cleveland, OH, in August of 2021, I got to be part of that amazing welcome for a new class when they received their 33rd degree. It's interesting to look back on it—and difficult to articulate—but there was a special new feeling, a new energy, that came with being a bestower of that experience instead of a recipient. Like the difference between the joys of giving and receiving gifts: both uplifting, but certainly in distinct ways.

And when I got together with the other 33rd-degree members of Western Pennsylvania at our picnic in August of this year, and we heard the announcement of the gentlemen who will receive their 33rd in Louisville in

August of next year, it was a tremendous pleasure to be part of that phone call—to wake Brothers out of their own daze, as it were, and say "Surprise! Congratulations! And here are more and more Brothers, who want to let you know how much we respect and appreciate you."

**When I walked into the room where I was to receive that degree, I felt the most overwhelming sensation of support and recognition that I think I have ever known.**

In conclusion—and I confess to you, I really only thought of this as I was writing—please remember it doesn't take a title or a jewel to be part of this process, part of this chain. Please take some time to think of the moments that have made your Masonic journey so far precious to you. Think of the men who have traveled with you, shown you the way, and helped you see all that you can be. Then, go out there and help make those moments for another Brother. You may be surprised what a gift it is to yourself, as well. □

# Uniontown Update

A message from the Thrice Potent Master of the Valley of Uniontown

VALLEY OF UNIONTOWN

## The Three-Headed Monster!

By Jonathan Green, 32°

Another Brother from my lodge and I often joke about the three-headed monster. All Lodges and Masonic bodies have them: the Masons with bad attitudes. It seems that when one finally goes there just another to fall right back into his place. We, as Masons, need to accept that it's a changing world and many lifestyles have changed as well. The days of a single working parent have gone by the wayside for a lot of families and the 9 to 5 workday is just about nonexistent.

In Masonry, we're supposed to help and support our Brothers, not nitpick them to the point they won't return to meetings or activities anymore. When new Brethren show interest in the work, we should do our best to teach and encourage them. Due to the many mergers in recent years, we accept the fact that each lodge had their own little way of doing things. But we must let our identities go and act as one.

Too many times, I have seen guys trying to be helpful but be more hurtful by confusing new members on the way different things are done. We should do our best to be mentors and teachers. To survive as a Fraternity, we need to promote ourselves to both our newer members and older ones. We

need to promote brotherly love and compassion. Brotherly love to help, aid and assist our fellow Brethren; to stand them back up when they fall. Compassion to try to understand their struggle and help them get through it.

We should do our best to be mentors and teachers.

Some Brethren really try to learn the work but struggle either due to lack of time or just not having the memory for it. But we should do our duty as Freemasons.

We should show brotherly love and help them as much as we can. Any officer of any Masonic body can be a teacher and mentor to those who show interest and want to advance through lines to keep our great Fraternity going. So, remember Brethren: be the brother who cares, not the three headed monster that chases everyone out the door. □







Dr. Glenn D. Miller, 33°

# Mitral Valve Prolapse **Part 1**

By Dr. Glenn D. Miller, II, 33°

In this issue, we will discuss the often-misunderstood mitral valve prolapse (MVP). As a prelude to this discussion, we will start with a basic anatomical and functional description of the mitral valve. The mitral valve is one of the four valves located within the heart. It is located between the left upper chamber (left atrium) and the left lower chamber (left ventricle). The mitral valve is composed of two flaps or leaflets and gets its name because of its resemblance to a Catholic bishop's mitre. The mitral valve is also known as the bicuspid valve or the left atrioventricular valve. The mitral valve leaflets are attached to the heart muscle via small tendons called chordae tendineae located on the underside of the leaflets and the papillary muscles which emanate from the inside walls of the left ventricle. These papillary muscles and chordae tendineae stiffen and hold the valve leaflets closed during systole (left ventricular contraction) to prevent backflow of blood from the left ventricle into the left atrium (mitral regurgitation). During diastole (left ventricular relaxation), the papillary muscles and chordae tendineae relax to allow the valve leaflets to open and permit blood flow from the left atrium into the left ventricle.

In a normally functioning mitral valve, the valve leaflets come together and touch, or coapt, during systole as previously described. In mitral valve prolapse (MVP), one or both valve leaflets bulge or flop backwards (prolapse) into the left atrium after touching or coapting. An easy way to simulate mitral valve prolapse (MVP) is to hold your hands out in front of your body with your fingers pointed away from your body.

Tapping your index fingers together simulates the normal closure of the mitral valve leaflets. MVP can be simulated by touching your index fingers together and then continuing to “pull” the fingertips until they point towards your body.

**The mitral valve is also known as the bicuspid valve or the left atrioventricular valve.**

Mitral valve prolapse is classified as either Primary or Secondary. Primary MVP is characterized by the myxomatous degeneration of the mitral valve apparatus in patients without any connective tissue diseases. Myxomatous degeneration is the non-inflammatory progressive destruction of the mitral valve apparatus secondary to altered synthesis and/or remodeling by Type VI collagen. This can result in mitral valve leaflet(s) thickening and abnormalities with typically more involvement of the posterior leaflet. It can also result in enlargement or dilatation of the mitral valve annulus as well as thickening, elongation, weakening, and possible rupture of the chordae tendineae. These structural abnormalities can then lead to prolapse of the valve leaflets and mitral regurgitation. Primary MVP is associated with inherited connective tissue diseases and is frequently seen in patients with Marfan's Syndrome, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, Loeys-Dietz Syndrome, and Pseudoxanthoma Elasticum Syndrome, as well as conditions such as scoliosis, Ebstein's anomaly, Graves's Disease, and muscular dystrophy.

Secondary MVP is characterized by mitral valve leaflets that are not thickened. It can be caused by damage to

the mitral valve structure due to a decrease in blood flow (ischemia) secondary to chronic coronary artery disease or an acute myocardial infarction. It can also be due to conditions that cause functional anatomical changes to the myocardium (heart muscle), such as rheumatic heart disease, an old myocardial infarction, or from hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (abnormal thickening of the left ventricular myocardial wall). Other risk factors for developing mitral valve prolapse include age greater than 50 years, significant alcohol usage, significant use of stimulants such as caffeine and amphetamines, and chronic magnesium deficiency.

**MVP affects roughly 2-3% of the population which equates to 7.8-8 million people in the United States and 175 million people worldwide.**

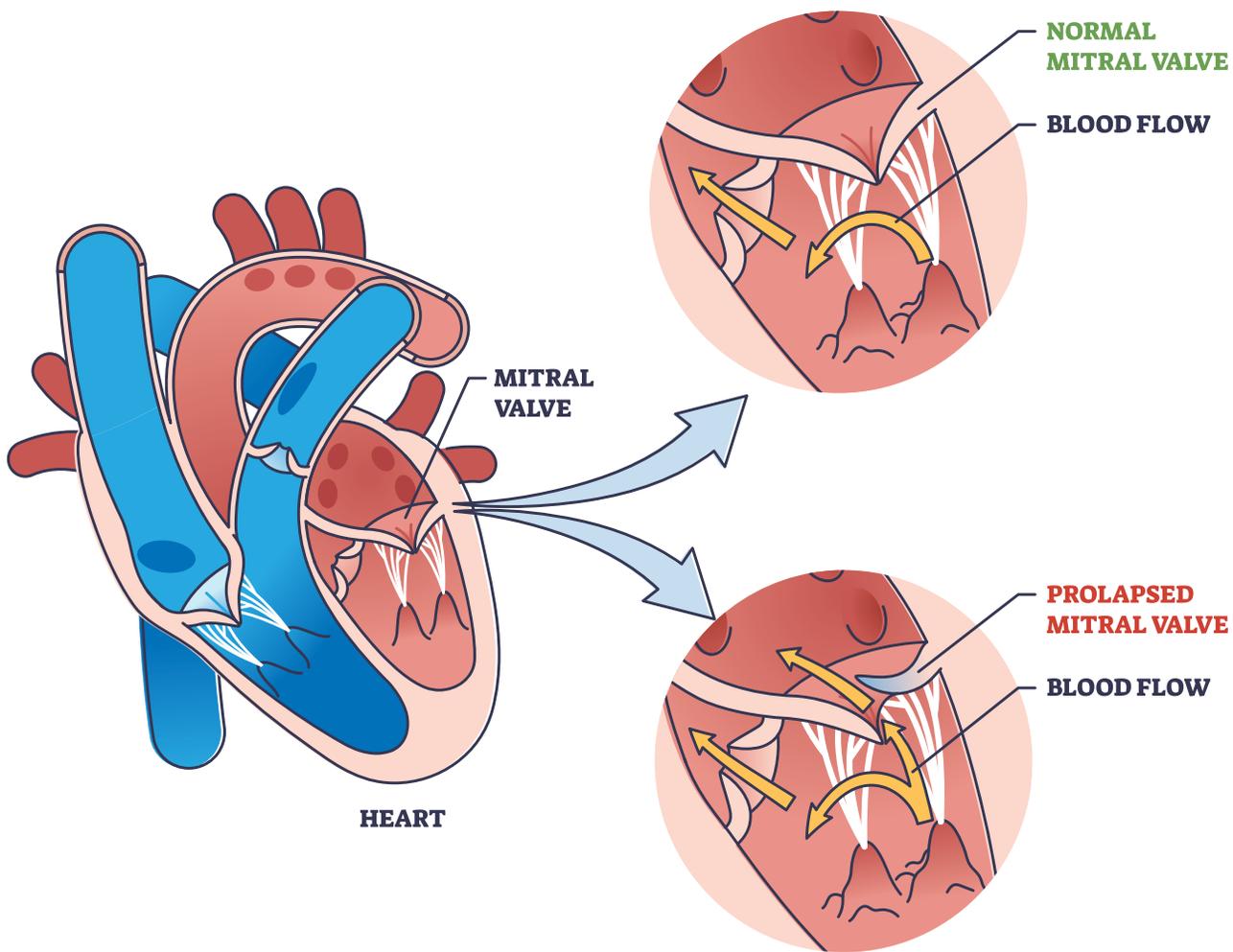
The classic stethoscope auscultatory findings of a mid-systolic “click” and late systolic murmur (associated with mitral valve prolapse and mitral regurgitation, respectively) were first described in 1887 by Drs. M. Cuffer and M. Barbillon, although they were not aware of the cause. Dr. John Brereton Barlow, a South African cardiologist, was the first to document the association of mitral valve leaflet prolapse and mitral regurgitation (via angiography) in patients with the auscultatory findings of a mid-systolic click and late systolic murmur. He published these findings in the American Heart Journal in 1963 and subsequently in the British Heart Journal in 1968. Dr. Barlow met Dr. J. Michael Criley, a cardiologist at Johns Hopkins University, on a trip to the United States in 1964. It was Dr. Criley who subsequently gave the name “mitral valve prolapse” to this cardiac disorder. Even though mitral valve prolapse is the most commonly used name associated with this cardiac condition, it is also known as Barlow syndrome, click-murmur syndrome, floppy valve syndrome, balloon mitral valve, billowing mitral valve syndrome, or myxomatous mitral valve disease.

MVP affects roughly 2-3% of the population which equates to 7.8-8 million people in the United States and 175 million people worldwide. It is somewhat more common in females and is often diagnosed in females within the 20-40 year-old age bracket. However, males are more likely to develop severe mitral regurgitation. Mitral valve prolapse can be inherited. It is a heterogeneous autosomal dominant trait which means that a child has a 50% chance of inheriting the gene if one of their parents has that gene. Interestingly, families that tend to suffer from MVP have physical characteristics of being tall and thin (low Body Mass Index) with long arms and fingers as well as having less curvatures in the thoracic and lumbar spines which give the appearance of having a “straight back.”

Most people are asymptomatic and never develop any symptoms. However, some people do develop symptoms, the most common of which are atypical chest pain and palpitations secondary to ventricular premature beats or supraventricular arrhythmias. Patients can also experience other symptoms suggestive of autonomic nervous system dysfunction which have

**MVP is somewhat more common in females and is often diagnosed in females within the 20-40 year-old age bracket. However, males are more likely to develop severe mitral regurgitation.**

been collectively labeled as “mitral valve prolapse syndrome.” These symptoms include the previously mentioned atypical chest pain and palpitations, as well as anxiety/panic attacks, fatigue, cough, exertional dyspnea/exercise intolerance, headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances, cold extremities, resting hypotension, dizziness/lightheadedness, and orthostasis (abnormal decrease in blood pressure upon standing) with or without syncope (loss of consciousness). Symptoms due to MVP may be aggravated by stress,



fatigue, dehydration, menstruation, pregnancy, or illness. If the mitral valve prolapse becomes severe and leads to the development of moderate to severe mitral regurgitation, the patient may develop enlargement of the left ventricle and/or left atrium which can lead to a weakened heart (decreased left ventricular ejection fraction), which can then lead to congestive heart failure (CHF) with significant lower extremity edema (swelling) and exertional dyspnea. These patients may then be at an increased risk of sudden death secondary

to life threatening ventricular arrhythmias although the overall risk of sudden cardiac death remains low at 0.2-0.4% per year for the collective populace.

In the next issue, we will conclude our discussion of mitral valve prolapse by reviewing the modalities used to diagnose the condition as well as the currently available medical and surgical therapeutic options.

□

# ValleyNews

A collection of recent happenings in the Valley of Pittsburgh

## Valley of Excellence

On October 27, Supreme Council held a reception for all recipients of the Valley of Excellence award. Brothers Bill Johnston, Commander in Chief, and Jordan Frei, Most Wise Master, received the award on behalf of the Valley of Pittsburgh; and Brothers Vic Baronie, Past Thrice Potent Master, and Abe Hayes, Deputy Master, accepted on behalf of the Valley of Uniontown.

While in Boston, they were also given tours of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts and the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library.

The Valley of Excellence award recognizes Valleys in the Scottish Rite, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction who go above and beyond in their endeavors. With focuses on areas of membership, service/philanthropy, leadership development and operations, this program encourages Valleys to deliver a premier Scottish Rite experience to their members.

Congratulations to the officers and members of both Valleys on this prestigious award!



Brothers Abe Hayes, Vic Baronie, Jordan Frei, and Bill Johnston in Lexington with the awards.

## Joint Degree Day

On November 19, the Valley of Pittsburgh and Syria Shrine held a joint degree conferral. Candidates had the opportunity to join both bodies by witnessing the 4th degree of the Scottish Rite and the new Knickerbocker degree of the Shrine.

6 new members took advantage of the opportunity, and we are anxious to make them 32nd degree Masons during the Spring Class to be held on April 21 and 22.



The Valley of Pittsburgh performs the fourth degree.



Syria Shrine divan



Terry Steinhauser, Potentate, and Bill Johnston, Commander in Chief



Syria Shrine clowns giving the pie award



The cast of the fourth degree on stage with Valley of Pittsburgh officers and candidates.

## 32nd Degree Road Show

On November 4 and 5, officers of the Valley took to the road to visit the Valley of Uniontown. That weekend, candidates not only got to witness all 11 Lodge of Perfection degrees, but for the first time in history, the Valley of Pittsburgh joined

them for the 32nd degree ceremonial as well.

Members of the Uniontown class will join us at our Spring Class on April 21 and 22.



*Officers and members of the Valley of Uniontown and the Valley of Pittsburgh*



*PJ Roup, 33°, Active for Pennsylvania, presents Brother Robert J. Fleming, 32°, with his MSA.*



*The ritual of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite is performed with great proficiency.*

## Blue Ride

Washington Lodge No. 164, Free and Accepted Masons, recently presented a check for \$1,500.00 to the CDC Pittsburgh. This was part of the proceeds from the 19th Annual Blue Ride held earlier this year. The ride was a joint effort between the Lodge and the Blue Knights Motorcycle Club Chapter 16.



*(l to r) Andrea Keeney; Dave Thumm; Rodney Bush; Dave Morgans; Dave Richards, Ride Chairman; Rick Cross; and Kevin Bonus.*

## Members Honored in November

November was Scottish Rite Month—an annual celebration of the Supreme Council which celebrating the best of the best in Scottish Rite Masonry. As part of that celebration, the Valley of Pittsburgh recognized medical service providers at our November meeting for all they have done to see us through the pandemic.

The officers and members paused to recognize our veterans as well.

Thanks to all for keeping us safe.



# The Latest

Important happenings coming soon to the Valley of Pittsburgh

FEB

2

**Reservations are required for Dinner only!**

Please contact the Valley Office:  
secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org  
412-939-3579

## Stated Meeting

Come out for a fun evening of fellowship and mystery.  
NOTE: the **Stated Meeting will start at 6:00 pm with entertainment for the ladies.** At 7:00 pm we will gather for dinner and a Who Done It performed by The Dinner Detective.

TIME: 6:00PM Meeting / 7:00PM Murder Mystery Dinner

LOCATION: GPMC

COST: \$15 per person for Dinner, no charge to attend meeting

RSVP: January 31

**PLEASE NOTE MEETING TIME CHANGE**

FEB

25

**Reservations are required.**

Please contact the Valley Office:  
secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org  
412-939-3579

## Combined Scottish Rite & York Rite Initiation Class

This is a great opportunity for new Candidates to join both the Scottish Rite and Chapter as well as current Scottish Rite Masons to join Chapter. At this joint conferral, the Scottish Rite will confer the 4th, 7th & 13th Degrees. The Chapter Degrees for the day will be their 4th, 6th & 7th.

LOCATION: GPMC

COST: None for members. Candidates must submit petitions and pay initiation fees

RSVP: February 21

MAR

11

**Reservations are required.**

Please contact the CDC-Pittsburgh Office  
or the Valley Office:  
secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org  
412-939-3579

## CDC Monte Carlo Night

A great evening of fun for a fantastic cause. Your ticket gets you hors d'oeuvres, entertainment, silent auctions, various casino games, a whole lot of fun, and the good feeling of helping children working to overcome the challenges of dyslexia.

TIME: 6:00-8:30PM

LOCATION: GPMC

COST: \$100 per person

RSVP: March 7

APR

2

**Reservations are required for Dinner.**

Please contact the Valley Office:  
secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org  
412-939-3579

## Story of the Crucifixion

Come out and enjoy the Valley of Pittsburgh's live performance of the Story of the Crucifixion in the Greater Pittsburgh Masonic Center's auditorium. Bring your friends and family. Dinner will be served after the performance for those who make dinner reservations.

TIME: 3:00PM

LOCATION: GPMC

COST: None for the Play / \$15.00/person for dinner

RSVP: March 28

## Fellowship Breakfast

You can't find a better breakfast with better company that supports a better cause. The breakfast is cooked and served by our local DeMolay and Rainbow and the proceeds benefit those organizations.

TIME: 9AM to 10:30AM

LOCATION: GPMC

COST: \$9/person (all you can eat)

RSVP: None required

JAN

28

To have an event listed in future issues, please contact the Valley Office at 412-939-3579, or by email at [secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org](mailto:secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org)

**MAR**  
**2**

**Reservations are required.**  
Please contact the Valley Office:  
[secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org](mailto:secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org)  
412-939-3579

## Valley Rite Nite

Members of the Valley of Pittsburgh will be going to Topgolf in Bridgeville for a night of fun and fellowship. Whether you are a good golfer or not, all are welcome to come out and enjoy the evening.

TIME: 7:00-9:00PM

LOCATION: Top Golf in Bridgeville

COST: TBD

RSVP: February 28

**APR**  
**21**

**APR**  
**22**

**Reservations are required.**  
Please contact the Valley Office:  
[secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org](mailto:secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org)  
412-939-3579

## Spring Class

The degrees slated for the weekend are the 4th, 9th, 14th, 16th, 18th, 30th, and 32nd. Come out to get your passport stamped and reconnect with your Scottish Rite Brothers.

TIME: 5:00-9:00PM Friday, 8:00-6:00PM Saturday

LOCATION: GPMC

COST: None for members. Candidates must submit petitions and pay initiation fees

RSVP: April 18

**FEB**  
**25**

**MAR**  
**25**

**APR**  
**29**

# Looking Ahead

**APR**  
**6**

**Stated Meeting**  
THURSDAY, APRIL 6  
6PM Dinner, 7PM Meeting  
GPMC

**MAY**  
**6**

**Ambassador Seminar**  
SATURDAY, MAY 6  
9:00AM  
GPMC

**MAY**  
**15**

**CDC Graduation Picnic**  
MONDAY, MAY 15  
6:30PM  
GPMC

**JUN**  
**1**

**Stated Meeting**  
THURSDAY, JUNE 1  
6PM Dinner, 7PM Meeting  
GPMC

# Fraternal Services Directory

These listed businesses subscribe to providing high quality customer service, delivered with a sense of warmth, friendliness, individual pride, respect, honesty, and the fraternal spirit.

## ACCOUNTING & TAXATION

**Richard A. Reynolds, CPA** 412-795-4194  
www.RichReynoldsCPA.com  
richreynolds@MSN.com

## ADVERTISING SPECIALITIES

**Grimes Advertising** 412-921-1325  
Eddie & Sandy Grimes goodadv@comcast.net  
www.good-advertising.com

## AUTOMOTIVE

**American Classics/Street Rods** 814-268-1234  
Dennis A. Liegey  
Americanclassics@windstream.net  
1026 3rd Avenue, Brockway, PA 15824-1012

**Flynn's Tire & Auto Service** 724-346-3701  
18 Locations  
Jeff Wonderling www.FlynnsTire.com

## BEARINGS & POWER TRANSMISSION

**Gipson Bearing & Supply Co.** 412-462-7960  
Craig Gipson www.gipsonbearing.com

## CATERING

**Party Line Catering, Deli & Bakery** 412-882-7110  
Custer Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15227  
Brian Meador www.partylinecatering.net

## CHIMNEY REPOINTING & REBUILDING

**Coffey Contracting Co. Inc.** 412-341-1127  
thomas.coffey3@verizon.net Pittsburgh, PA  
Tom Coffey www.coffeycontracting.com

## FUNERAL SERVICES

**George Irvin Green Funeral Home**  
www.georgegreenfuneralhome.com  
Munhall, PA Donald Green 412-461-6394

**Jefferson Memorial Cemetery & Funeral Home**  
Pleasant Hills Harry C. Neel 412-655-4500  
www.jeffersonmemorial.biz

**Warco-Falvo Funeral Home** 724-225-1500  
Washington, PA S.Timothy Warco  
www.warcofalvofuneralhome.com

**Young Funeral Home Ltd** 724-283-3333  
William F. Young III  
127 W. Jefferson St., Butler, PA 16003  
www.youngfuneralhomes.com

For advertising rates and information, please contact the Valley Office at 412-939-3579 or by email at secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org

## GRAPHIC DESIGN / CREATIVE SERVICES

**Square Peg Design** 724-925-0224  
Rodney E. Boyce www.squarepegdesign.com  
rboyce@squarepegdesign.com

## HOME REMODELERS

**Unglo Construction LLC** 412-977-8924  
License # PA069933  
Paul M. Unglo II Bethel Park, PA  
Building, Renovation & Remodeling

## INSURANCE

**Rodgers Insurance Group** 412-922-1651  
James M. Wehar  
Pittsburgh, PA jwehar@roddersgrp.com

## PLUMBING

**John R. Meyers Plumbing, Inc.** 412-787-2370  
John Meyers jmeyers161@verizon.net  
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## REAL ESTATE

**Mac McIlrath, CRB** Mac13@kw.com  
Keller Williams, Associate Broker  
4710 Clairton Blvd, Pittsburgh, PA 15236  
Cell:(412) 882-9002 Office:(412) 884-3800

## ROOFING

**Coffey Contracting Co. Inc.** 412-341-1127  
Tom Coffey www.coffeycontracting.com  
thomas.coffey3@verizon.net

## VIDEOGRAPHY

**Dreamscape Productions** 412-965-1860  
P.J. Roup pjroup@gmail.com

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August 1, 2022 - July 31, 2023

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Richard F. Kucera, 32° . . . . . Jordan L. Frei, 32°

### Allegiance

The bodies of the Scottish Rite, sitting in the Valley of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, acknowledge and yield allegiance to the Supreme Council, 33°, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the United States of America whose Grand East is in Lexington, Massachusetts, and whose Officers are: Ill.: Peter J. Samiec, 33°, Sovereign Grand Commander, Ill.: Robert J. Bateman, 33°, Deputy for Pennsylvania. Other Active members for Pennsylvania are: Ill.: Stephen Gardner, 33°, Ill.: Thomas R. Labagh, 33°, Ill.: Keith E. Parkinson, 33°, and Ill.: Paul J. Roup, 33°.

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Auction*

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*Top Prizes  
and More*

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**6-8:30PM**

**GREATER PITTSBURGH MASONIC CENTER**

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**Valley of Pittsburgh**  
**Gourgas Lodge of Perfection**  
Greater Pittsburgh Masonic Center  
3579 Masonic Way  
Pittsburgh, PA 15237-2700



# THURSDAY NIGHT AT THE RITE



## SEASON IV DEGREES

**20°**

WORLD PREMIERE VIDEO  
January 19, 2023

**28°**

VALLEY OF BRIDGEPORT  
February 2, 2023

**5°**

VALLEY OF PORTLAND  
February 16, 2023

**9°**

VALLEY OF ROCHESTER  
March 2, 2023

**7°**

VALLEY OF BOSTON  
March 16, 2023

**14°**

VALLEY OF MICHIGAN  
March 30, 2023

**21°**

VALLEY OF HARRISBURG  
April 13, 2023

EACH THURSDAY NIGHT AT THE RITE PRESENTATION WILL INCLUDE THE 4°

Dates listed above may be subject to change due to availability and scheduling.